Canadian Centre
For Foreign Policy
Development

Centre Canadien
pour le développement
de la politique étrangère

Policy Options

Integrated Report from the Round Tables on

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE FUTURE: IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Ottawa, Kingston, Victoria
November 26, 30, December 7-8, 1998

125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2
Phone: 613 944 4150 (Communications) 613 944 0391 (Project/Fund Information) 613 992 3690 (Events Information)
Fax: 613 944 0687 **Web-site: http://www.cfp-pec.gc.ca**

ROUND-TABLES ON THE FUTURE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The questions surrounding the future of nuclear weapons within the dynamic environment of the post-Cold War era are undoubtedly among the most pertinent issues facing us today. The necessity of addressing them generated broad-ranging discussions. The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development in partnership with the Physicians for Global Survival (Ottawa), Centre for Global Studies (University of Victoria), and the Centre for International Relations (Queen's University)/Royal Military College organised three round-tables in December 1998 which coincided with the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Brussels and the pending release of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade's report titled "Canada and the Nuclear Challenge." The round-tables included academics, strategic studies experts, NGOs, policy makers and international experts from the US, Russia, India, Israel, Europe, and Japan. In the following Marketa Geisler summarises the main points of the round-table report drawn by Dawn McLean.

KEY THEMES

Strong agreement developed during the round-table discussions that Canada should continue to pursue the principle of reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons based on the creation of sound policies and practices.

Several key issues regarding the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons were explored. The issue of prohibition was discussed by John Steinbruner from the Brookings Institute who contended that since ultimate elimination is not feasible in the near future, weapons should be assigned "status other than active." The issue of safety was addressed in relation to unsafe nuclear operating conditions in Russia as well as new proliferators in Asia. To counter these destabilising conditions, Steinbruner recommended enhancement of transparency through accurate accounting practices and creation of an inventory for both nuclear weapons and fissile materials. In the long run, he extrapolated, such measures could represent steps towards achieving prohibition goals.

The "moral order" or disposition of society towards reduction and elimination is undoubtedly key for the realisation of these goals. Ernie Regeher from Project Ploughshares emphasised the necessity of recapturing the seriousness of the issues in the public's mind since, as he stated, "[t]hat kind of moral understanding of the heinousness of theses weapons is going to be, in the long term, fundamental to a successful regime and international climate that abolishes nuclear weapons." Indeed, it is public involvement that gives legitimacy to policy making and adds vigour to political will and leadership.

The underlying context for these deliberations was stressed by former US Senator Alan Cranston. In his view it is inadequate Cold War logic that dominates the US doctrine and expenditure policy on nuclear weapons to this day – a logic that does not reflect the changing realities of the post-Cold War environment. Therefore, new approaches have to be developed to cope with new realities posed by the contemporary international system. In addition Gwynne

Dyer pointed out the gulf between US rhetoric and policy on nuclear arms relating its cause to domestic vested interest of the military industrial complex rather than any strategic or diplomatic context. Nevertheless,
despite these shortfalls the necessity of the US leadership was emphasised by Gordon Smith of the Centre for Global Studies.

The issue of the relationship between Canada and NATO was also on the top of the round-tables' agenda. Some Canadian experts contended that NATO could be the best place to generate a genuine debate on the feasibility of eliminating nuclear weapons. On the other hand, others such as Dean Oliver of Carleton University, cautioned that to address nuclear weapons questions in the NATO review could prove divisive and counter-productive at this time.

Many of the participants see an opportunity to show leadership by promoting a debate on re-thinking the "nuclear culture" through NATO. They pointed out that by changing the rhetoric of stated "political value" vested in possessing nuclear arms long after their Cold War political "indispensability" is crucial to reduce the risk of proliferation. This is particularly pertinent to the right of first use clause that reinforces the political status of nuclear weapons. Therefore, they argue, the emerging document for the NATO 1999 review should not contain language that re-enforces the present political "status" of nuclear weapons.

The relationship between Canada and the United States was addressed by many participants. The issue of Canada's capacity to take an independent position on nuclear disarmament in opposition to American policy was especially pertinent to the discussion. While Canada has taken some initiatives that have not provoked retaliation from the US in the past, Canada's political culture of compromise, compliance, and participation will likely influence straying too far from US policy. Warnings about embarrassing the Americans and the consequent danger of feeding isolationist tendencies in the US were expressed as well as the necessity to raise awareness among the American public about the nuclear threat.

Other issues discussed during the round-tables were questions about the Nuclear Five and the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Here problems with horizontal proliferation in the Middle East (Israel), South Asia (India, Pakistan), and East Asia (China and Korea) were addressed. The NTP's dual bargain stating that non-nuclear states agree to banish their nuclear ambitions if nuclear states disarm was countered by the argument that states such as India are unlikely to renounce their nuclear capability unless the Nuclear Five now do so. Furthermore, Canada was strongly encouraged to integrate into the middle powers networks advocating broad nuclear disarmament, together with countries like Germany.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

The discussion generated the following foreign policy recommendations:

1. Canada should support the review process of NATO and provide some leadership in defining its emerging role.
2. Canada should support the re-examination of NATO's strategic concept to take note of the reduced political role and value of nuclear weapons.
3. Canada should assist Russia to deal with the challenges of command, control, and maintenance of nuclear weapons.
4. Canadian policy should be well-grounded and balanced between principles and practices

with intelligent responses to the Standing Committee's report released in December 1998.

5. Canadian government should count on strong public support for NATO.
6. Civil society initiatives expand the parameters of public support for the abolition of nuclear weapons.
7. Horizontal proliferation in Asia needs to be addressed.
8. Canada should support German initiatives.
9. It is important to include the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Department of National Defence in discussions at the same time as nuclear weapons issues are both foreign policy and defence policy matters.
10. The land-mines success proved issue-based coalitions are effective and Canada should continue to take a lead in similar processes.

CONCLUSION

Underlying tensions exist between those who contend Canada should take a strong leadership role for nuclear disarmament and those who caution about the dangers of upsetting NATO. While some assert that Canada should lead a new disarmament agenda, support the German initiatives, and recognize the strength of civil society,
others highlight Canada's own experiences with nuclear weapons, the dangers of raising issues that could lessen Canada's influence, and the pitfalls of embarrassing the US.

The next step involves analysis of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade's report due May 9, 1999.

"THE FUTURE OF NUCLEAR ARMS" IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Integrated Report from Roundtables in Ottawa, Kingston and Victoria, December , 1998

THE CONTEXT:

"The Future of Nuclear Weapons" was discussed at roundtables held in Kingston, Ottawa and Victoria during early December. These timely discussions coincided with the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels and the pending release of the Canadian Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade's report, "Canada and the Nuclear Challenge" (December 10, 1998).

International and Canadian experts from government and civil society (NGOs, labour, strategic studies academics) addressed a number of key issues at the three roundtables, including:

* the NATO Strategic Concept Review
* ballistic missile defence
* the Non-Proliferation Treaty
* Canada and USA relations
* the role of middle powers
* the future role of NATO
* the elimination of all nuclear weapons - feasibility and desirability, and
* the increased threat of biological and chemical weapons

It was a complex and ambitious agenda. Nuclear weapons culture is currently undergoing transition and although some thought Canada should work within the existing US lead consensus, these roundtables confirmed support for Canadian leadership to pursue reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons.

KEY THEMES:

1. Canada's objectives and roles:

There was strong agreement at the three roundtables that Canada should continue to pursue the principle to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. Sound policies and practices toward that goal should be

developed. Canada should support both strong, sophisticated principles and practices. According to Professor Brian Job, Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia, "we shouldn't give up on one for the other (principles or practices). Canada should pursue intelligent change based on well-grounded policy development." (Victoria)

The Standing Committee's report,"Canada and the Nuclear Challenge" is a reference point for further debate and analysis and will shape Canada's role and objectives. The report was not released at the time of the three roundtables but the final draft recommendations were examined by Michel Fortmann, University of Montreal, at the Kingston roundtable
(Appendix 1)

There will be 150 days to respond to the Standing Committee's report once released on Dec. 10, 1998.

2. Elimination:

a) "Prohibition": John Steinbruner, Brookings Institute in Washington, DC, stated that elimination of nuclear weapons must be taken very seriously. He claimed that ultimate elimination was not feasible in the near future and introduced the goal of "prohibition" whereby weapons are put into a "status of other than active". In his opinion, abolition of weapons needed much more thought and new strategies and practices need to be developed.

b) "Safety": The immediate nuclear operating conditions are very unsafe worldwide, with new proliferators in Asia. Problems are compounded as the US and Russia are using standard Cold War deterence (execute within 20 minutes) when Russia's current capacity is about a century behind that of the United States. Russia is drifting with a deteriorating infrastructure. "We have not fathomed the problems in Russia - deep structural problems which have become an unmovable burden and consequently the greatest security issue in the world." (Steinbruner, Victoria roundtable) Alyn Ware raised the concerns expressed worldwide about Y2K.

c) Disclosure: Steinbruner recommended an accurate accounting system be designed and executed worldwide - a transparent, accurate accounting of all nuclear weapons as a step in achieving the goal of prohibition. Alyn Ware further emphasized the new disarmament agenda point of creating inventory for both nuclear weapons and fissile materials.

d) "Reinforcing the Moral Order": Reinforcement of the moral climate in public opinion will build public and political support for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The seriousness must be recaptured in the public's mind. "We must build a moral order

and moral response to those weapons which is the central thing that durability depends upon. Remember we need to have barriers between knowledge and use which transcend a broad range of political and strategic environments. That kind of moral understanding of the heinousness of these weapons is going to be, in the long term, fundamental to a successful regime and international climate that abolishes nuclear weapons." (Ernie Regeher, Project Ploughshares, Ottawa roundtable)

e) The nuclear culture is changing: US Senator Alan Cranston (Victoria roundtable) gave an impassioned argument for moving quickly to major, not incremental, reductions in the level of nuclear weapons held by the US and Russia, supporting the technical arguments of Steinbruner and the moral issues of holding such arsenals stated by Regeher. Senator Cranston strongly stated that the post-war environment does not support the Cold War logic represented by the largely unchanged US doctrine and expenditure on nuclear weapons.

David Haglund, Queen's University, questioned for reflection that "the international system had been fundamentally altered and the transatlantic zone of peace was not based upon a balance-of-power ultima ratio but a post-westphalian, post-balance-of-power order." (Kingston) The question of nuclear arms within these worldwide changes needs new approaches as does the reflection on the issue of the possibility of real progress on nuclear issues.

3. Canada and NATO:

a) "The future of NATO" An evolving global role for NATO was articulated but not defined. Questions raised by Steven Lee, National Director, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, included:

* what kind of new role for NATO
* who leads these changes
* what about nuclear arms out of area?
* what is the role of the European Union and the "new Europe" ?

Canada could play an important role in shaping the changing role of NATO. Some Canadian experts feel NATO is the place to get a genuine debate going on the feasibility of eliminating nuclear weapons.

b) "NATO and Nuclear Arms" Canada is in a position to help the re-thinking of how NATO might address nuclear weapon issues. Dean Oliver (Victoria roundtable) and some other strategic studies experts cautioned that to address nuclear weapons questions in the NATO review would be divisive and counter-productive at this time. Others felt, "If not now, then when?" (Peggy Mason, CCIPS). The current NATO review process time frame (April 1999, Washington) may be short but it is a window to raise the level of debate particularly with strong public support in Canada for NATO at this time. The NATO membership is growing to include former allies of Russia and NATO has a

partnership with Russia, so this is a critical moment to raise issues and debate. ("Who is the enemy now that Russia is a NATO partner?")

c) "Political Value" Many saw an opportunity to show leadership in re-thinking the "nuclear culture". Changing the rhetoric to reduce the stated "political value" of possessing nuclear arms long after their cold war political indispensability is crucial to reduce the risk of proliferation and strengthen the NPT. The emerging document from the NATO review should not contain language that reflects the status of weapons (Tom Graham, Ottawa roundtable). Canada could play a role in these wording changes (Sir Michael Alexander, UK, Victoria roundtable)

4. Canada - United States Relations: Professor Stephen Clarkson, University of Toronto, raised Canada's capacity to take an independent position on nuclear disarmament in opposition to American policy. Despite Canada's deep integration into the American economy it was felt historically Canada had taken some initiatives (criticism of Helms-Burton Act, pursuing the ban on land mines, international criminal court) which have not provoked retaliation. However, Canada's political culture of compromise, compliance and participation will likely work against taking a stand independent of US policy. The experience of fallout for New Zealand as a result of taking an independent position must be remembered.

Louis Delvoie, Queen's University, said, "One pitfall to be avoided....is to embarrass the Americans which would play to isolationist elements in the US for two reasons: US full engagement is essential to maintain world peace and Canada is ever-more dependent on the US for its trade and well-being. (Kingston roundtable)

Cathleen Fisher said a review of US policy is long overdue and the American public should know of the varying views on what to do and the different frames of reference in discussion. She asked where is the theological and moral debate? Canada could help raise this awareness.

5. Nuclear Five, Non Proliferation Treaty and others: US Ambassador Tom Graham strongly stated "There are only 5 nuclear powers and there will only ever be 5 nuclear powers". Graham emphasized the NPT's dual bargain of non-nuclear states agreeing not to acquire nuclear weapons and that nuclear would engage in disarmament negotiations. He said any review of nuclear policy must start with the NPT which is the "security cornerstone" within the context of nuclear weapons.

Sir Michael Alexander, former UK representative on the North Atlantic Council emphasized old power and the status quo. He said the discussion of the future of nuclear arms should be with the Nuclear Five only and Canada "shouldn't knock the nuclear culture too hard". He cautioned Canada shouldn't take too high a profile in the nuclear disscussions within NATO. Perhaps flagging disclosure and transparency and wording

changes would be useful.

Vertical proliferation is not occurring, but horizontal proliferation is taking place in three areas of the world: the Middle East (Israel), South Asia (India, Pakistan), and East Asia (China, North Korea), although there may be some willingness for non-proiferation in China. The situation in India and Pakistan and in North Korea were immediate concerns, as is the non recognition of these new proliferators.

It was unlikely India will renounce it's nuclear capability unless the "Nuclear Five" do so. The recent testing in India was shocking and Peggy Mason reminded that norms are not binding and are not international laws. It was also suggested that Israel is unlikely to promote nuclear disarmament as long as Israelis perceive a biological and chemical weapons threat.

6. Middle Powers: At the Ottawa roundtable, Senator Douglas Roche said, "Canada's abstention vote on the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) resolution at the UN signals a shift in Canada's policy on nuclear weapons." The Middle Power Initiative supports a no-first-use policy but only as an interim measure towards an unequivocal commitment to immediate steps and negotiations required for the elimination of nuclear arms. Senator Roche emphasized the need for like-minded non-nuclear governments and forward-minded movements of civil society to work together for change, as they had in the Ottawa Process to ban landmines.

Other participants emphasized the need for Canada to make real efforts to establish links with other middle powers who are potential allies, such as Germany. The economic depression in East Asia could cause Japan to move towards using a limited number of nuclear weapons as diplomatic leverage, just as China is indicating they do not want a nuclearized East Asia.

7. Public debate, role and legitimacy of policy: The public needs to know the depth of the seriousness of the debate. Although it is hard to engage the public in slow elimination, they do support comprehensive efforts as is evidenced in the public support for the eradication of landmines. Conrad Wynn said Canadian opinion has an appetite for ethical decisions but not anti-Americanism.

Cathleen Fisher, Stimson Center, Washington, DC, articulated the need to devise creative solutions such as new agreements on transparency and methods of engaging the UK and France in the debates. She emphasized that a theological and moral debate should take place and the need for strong political will and leadership.

Engaging retired, respected military similar to the recent statements by retired American military and civilian leaders organized by Senator Cranston was seen as a tool

for legitimacy. Alyn Ware, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, said public opinion favours the establishment of a Nuclear Weapons Convention, even though governments do not, and "there is more support for such a convention than for the elimination of nuclear weapons." (Ottawa roundtable)

8. No First Use: Even though the agenda is full and opinion diverse, the "no first use" discussion is seen by many as a useful vehicle to open up debate within NATO. For the upcoming NATO review, Ambassador Tom Graham stated, "NATO should downplay the significance of nuclear weapons and commit to no-first-use policy....emerging documents should not contain language reflecting the status of nuclear weapons as the most important weapon that NATO possesses, that it is essential to peace or that it is the ultimate guarantee to NATO's security..... These steps would strengthen the NPT and reduce the risk of proliferation." (Ottawa roundtable)

The current language of NATO maintains political status of nuclear weapons, particularly the right of first-use. This political value of nuclear arms must be reduced. It was also stated that a global no-first use should be put in the existing context to include proliferators in Asia (India, Pakistan, Korea). David Haglund expressed another view, "Why rock the boat when NATO is adapting well to a new security landscape/doctrine?" If the end-game of no first use is the abolition of nuclear weapons, there is no proof there is correlation between the two. If in the end no-first use is neither here nor there, why spend political capital on the issue?"

9: Dangers - Accidents; Command and Control; Russia: The situation in Russia is very serious and the greatest nuclear threat. Russia is now seen to be a failing state. Russia is almost in a state of forced disarmament with poor maintenance over aging weapons, limited command and control over unemployed scientists and lacking the security of political leadership by someone like Gorbachev.

Tariq Rauf, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, California, gave a rivetting presentation on the vast potential of nuclear anarchy in Russia (with strong disagreement from Igor Sutyagin, Moscow). Rauf outlined the potential for leakage, possible accidents and the human proliferation of unemployed Russian scientists going to China, Taiwan, India and Pakistan. Repeatedly stated was the importance of a commitment that nuclear arms will not be used to deter the use of chemical and biological weapons.

10. United States Policy and Public Opinion: Gwynne Dyer, at the Ottawa roundtable said, "No-first use exists in practice in NATO but there is a gulf between US rhetoric and US policy on nuclear arms. The US is adamant not to change their posture because of domestic vested interests of the military industrial complex rather than any strategic or diplomatic interests." The US uses the threat of biological and chemical weapons as a means of continuing the first use of nuclear weapons. The US must re-examine and alter these postures. It should show leadership.

Gordon Smith, Director of the Centre for Global Studies, also emphasized that the US must take a lead. "Today there are approximately 3,000 launchers on high alert in each of the US and Russia. It is necessary to move quickly to 500 or less on each side. The US must take the lead."

Tad Daly, UN Charter Campaign, said, " by illuminating how close we have come to nuclear war in the past it is possible to capture the imagination of the US public". He supported university campaigns, printed materials, and concerts as public mobilization methods. He stated the future of nuclear weapons should be on the agenda of the next presidential election in the US.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

* Canada should support the review process of NATO and provide some leadership in defining the emerging role for NATO - what is it, who leads it and what does it do in the changing context of the nuclear culture ?

* Canada should support the re-examination of NATO's strategy for the possible first use of nuclear weapons.

* Russia's problems are enormous - the command and control and maintenance of it's nuclear weapons is frightening - the country needs assistance in many areas.

* Canadian policy should be well-grounded and balanced in principles and practice with intelligent responses to the Standing Committee report.

* Canadian public support is strong for NATO.

* Civil society initiatives expand the parameters of mobilization and public support for abolition of nuclear weapons.

* The horizontal proliferation in Asia needs to be addressed.

* Canada should support the German Initiatives

* It is important to include DFAIT and DND in discussions at same time as these implications impact on both foreign policy and defence policy.

* The land-mines success proved issue-based coalitions are effective and Canada should continue to take a lead in similar processes.

CONCLUSION:

The Ottawa, Kingston and Victoria roundtables took place prior to the release of "Canada and the Nuclear Challenge". Underlying tensions do exist between those who feel Canada should take strong leadership and those who caution the dangers of rocking the NATO boat. Within the willingness to pursue the principle of reduction and/or elimination there are those who would take different paths.

There are those who want stronger leadership which pushes a new disarmament agenda, supports the German initiative, recognizes the strengths of civil society initiatives, knows independent action can be taken without serious retaliation, knows there is public support for reduction and understands the success of the landmines initiative. On the other side there are those that highlight Canada's experiences with nuclear weapons, the dangers of raising issues that could lessen Canada's influence and the pitfalls of embarrassing the US.

Further expert opinion and analysis should relate to the framework of the Standing Committee final report released on December 10, 1998. Themes emphasized in the roundtables and found in "Canada and the Nuclear Challenge" could be looked at further by experts who have 150 days (from Dec. 10) to respond.

Report prepared by:

Dawn McLean,
Consultant, Victoria, B.C.

Apendix 1:

1. to reduce the political value and legitimacy of nuclear weapons
2. to mobilize public opinion through an awareness of the humanitarian, environmental and economic costs of proliferation.
3. to provide more information to Canadians on the civil use of nuclear technology to maintain the support of public opinion for these technologies.
4. to encourage nuclear weapons states to declare their non-equivocal commitment to begin and conclude negotiations on the elimination of nuclear weapons.
5. to strongly support the concept of de-alerting of all nuclear arsenals.
6. to encourage both the US and Russia to carry on with the START process and in particular the ratification of START II by Russia.
7. to study, with the US and Russia, the possibility of installing a direct hotline with NORAD in order to avoid the possible problems with the Y2K problem.
8. to discard the option of burning mixed oxide fuel (MOX) in Canada.
9. to encourage Britain, France and China to de-alert their nuclear arsenals
10. to support all international efforts to solve the regional security problems in East Asia and the Middle East.
11. to support international efforts to impede the proliferation of biological and chemical weapons as well as delivery systems.
12. to convince other states to sign the new nuclear cooperation agreements
13. to add a clause which would require annual meetings with Canadians to all future nuclear cooperation agreements
14. to reaffirm Canada's support for the NPT and to counter any attempts to revise the treaty to recognize Pakistan and India as nuclear weapon countries. To ratify the CTBT and to incite other states to do the same.
15. to vigorously emphasize within NATO the need to include the nuclear component in the reexamination of its Strategic concept and that the latter should indicate that:

* all members are committed to reduce nuclear arsenals and eventually eliminate them
* the probability of the use of nuclear weapons is lower than it has ever been and the possibility of resorting to these weapons must be progressively diminished
* the Alliance's political and military strength precludes the need for American nuclear weapons in Europe to demonstrate the solidarity of its members and the transatlantic link.